

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments, and the following remarks. Claims 1-3 are in the application.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3 under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over JP '619. Applicants respectfully traverse.

The Examiner states that it is obvious to a person skilled in the art to displace the heat exchanger (8) from one side (namely the inner side) of the ring gap (9) to the other side (namely the outer side) of the ring gap (9) of JP '619 to achieve the present invention. However, a person skilled in the art by no means arrives at the invention by means of this measure. Both in the case of DE 2 228 215 (Guinera), which is discussed in the introduction to the specification, and in the case of JP '619, a person skilled in the art must solve the task of providing advantageous inert gas cooling, without intervening in the design of the annealing base, as is explained in the second paragraph on page 2 of the specification.

The division of the annealing base into an outer and an inner ring part by means of the ring channel (7) must be viewed

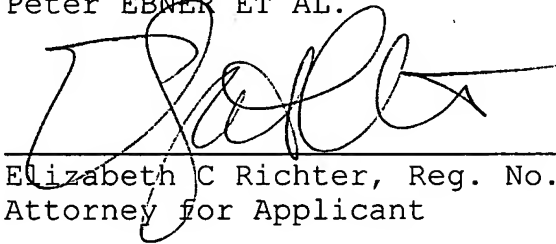
as being a massive intervention in the design of the annealing base, both in JP '619 and in Guinera. Therefore the question comes up what kind of an influence the displacement of the heat exchanger (8) of JP '619 from the inside to the outside of the ring gap (9) is supposed to have on the division of the annealing base (6) by means of the ring channel (7). By means of such a displacement of the heat exchanger (8), essentially all that happens is that the flow guidance of the inert gas cooled in the heat exchanger (8) toward the ring gap (9) becomes more complicated. Without any knowledge of the invention, a person skilled in the art would have no reason to question the usefulness of the ring channel (7) that divides the annealing base. Neither JP '619 nor any other prior art document can provide even the remotest indication of doing without this ring channel (7) and feeding the inert gas to the heat exchanger (8) only on the exit side of the guidance apparatus (5), which makes a ring channel outside the annealing base possible at all, as the invention teaches.

This shows that it is not sufficient to displace the heat exchanger (8) of JP '619 from the inside of the ring gap (9) to its outside in order to arrive at the invention. After all, the design of the annealing base is not influenced by such a displacement of the heat exchanger, in any manner. All that

happens is that the flow guidance of the cooled inert gas from the heat exchanger (8) to the ring gap (9) of JP '619 becomes more difficult, so that a person skilled in the art cannot recognize any sense in such a measure, and therefore would not consider such a measure without knowledge of the invention.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 1-3 are patentable over the cited reference. Early allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter EBNER ET AL.

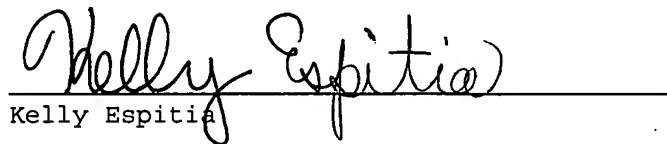


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